

COLLECTION OVERVIEW

ANGLOPHONE/COMMONWEALTH LITERATURE

I. SCOPE

This overview of the Library of Congress's English literature collection covers the literature of Great Britain, Ireland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. It includes works of fiction, poetry, and drama, as well as secondary sources such as literary criticism, biographies of authors, and bibliographies. Classes include PR1-8469 for English literature; PR8500-8697 for Scotland; PR8700-8897 for Ireland; PR8900-8997 for Wales; PR9180-9199.3 for Canada; PR9600-PR9619.3 for Australia; and PR9620-9639.2 for New Zealand, as well as corresponding classes in Z for bibliographies. Literature is represented in multiple formats across the Library's collections. The majority of the materials are found in the General Collections in books and bound periodicals, but literature is also found in electronic, serial, microform, manuscript, recorded sound, and motion picture formats.

II. SIZE

As of October, 2007, the Library of Congress holds an estimated 177,423 items in English literature classified in PR according to the OPAC. Specific counts are not currently available by each country, although PR9180-9199 covering Canadian literature holds approximately 11,750 items. Until the 1970s the Library cataloged English fiction in PZ, in which there are more than 200,000 works. Fiction was not categorized by country of origin, so it is not possible to estimate the number of country-specific works in that range; the majority are American. In addition, the Library has a strong collection of bibliographies about literature and specific authors classified in Z. Specific numbers broken down by country are not currently available in this classification.

III. RESEARCH STRENGTHS

The Library's general collections are extremely strong in British literature as the Library has historically collected materials from Great Britain at the highest level accorded any foreign country. The 1985 *RLG Conspectus for Linguistics, Languages, and Literatures* rates the Library's collections at research levels for British and Canadian literature and LC has continued to collect at that level. Due to LC's collection policy, the unevenness of the national bibliographies, or the reliability of the Library's overseas dealers over the last century, the collections are slightly less strong for Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand. Collections have improved for these countries in the last two decades, and

important authors from all of these countries are well represented. LC is currently collecting at a research level, although most popular fiction is collected in a sampling rather than a comprehensive fashion. The Library benefits greatly from the fact that much of the literature of these Anglophone countries is co-published in the United States and is thus acquired through copyright and the Cataloging in Publication (CIP) program. The Rare Book and Special Collections Division maintains a collection of first English editions of major British authors.

IV. AREAS OF DISTINCTION

Commonwealth literature in the Library's General Collections are distinct for their breadth and depth. Few libraries in the world have collected as extensively or for so long in the literatures of the Commonwealth countries. The Library benefits greatly from the fact that many works from these countries are co-published in the United States and must be deposited for copyright. Several important research collections in microform are held by the Library. These include: *Early English Books, 1475-1640*; *Early English Books, 1641-1700*; *English Literary Periodicals*; *Early British Periodicals*; *Pre-1900 Canadiana*; and the extensive American dissertation collection. Other notable special collections include: Rudyard Kipling collections comprised of William Nontelle Carpenter's and Rear Adm. Lloyd H. Chandler's collections, giving the Library the largest holdings of Kipling's early works outside of England; The Francis Longe Collection of published theatrical works; and correspondence by Shelley, Wilde, Shaw, Browning, and numerous authors held in the Manuscript Division.

V. ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

While the Library subscribes to standard electronic resources for the study of literature, such as the *Modern Language Association International Bibliography*, the *Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature*, and the *Literature Resource Center*, LC does not currently have access to *Early English Books Online (EEBO)* or *Literature Online (LION)*, two important resources found at most major research libraries. In general, the Library of Congress does not have a strong collection of electronic databases compared to such institutions as Johns Hopkins or Harvard Universities. The Library of Congress does, however, subscribe to *Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO)* and draws area scholars here to use it. In the area of digitization, through the Global Gateway Collections the Library of Congress has digitized the *Lewis Carroll Scrapbook* and William Blake materials from the Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection. The Library links to a large number of freely available Web sites and other born digital material related to literature, but has not comprehensively collected or archived such material. Electronic literature is a burgeoning new field utilizing mixed media. The Electronic Literature Organization is in the forefront of collecting this new literature and the Library of Congress has entered into a partnership with this organization to archive important Web sites selected by ELO. Such a partnership may prove useful as a model for future relationships with outside organizations for capturing and preserving digital content.

VI. WEAKNESSES/EXCLUSIONS

The Library has long had a practice of excluding printed newsletters devoted to individual authors. As more of these newsletters develop into Web sites, the Library should revisit the need to acquire such sites through Web archiving. Some journals indexed in the *Modern Language Association International Bibliography* are not held by the Library or have large gaps. As there are no automatic claiming procedures at the Library for missing serials, gaps continue to develop. As noted above, the Library of Congress's subscriptions to electronic databases do not compare favorably to other strong research libraries in this country. The Library should consider again joining the Text Creation Partnership, an endeavor to support the creation of accurately keyboarded and encoded editions of thousands of historical and culturally significant works. The Library of Congress has undertaken relatively few digitization projects specifically related to English literature while understandably focusing on Americana. Literature as a field, however, is not well-represented in the American Memory collections. Finally, a significant amount of the poetry and fiction of these Commonwealth countries, except for England, has been given minimal level cataloging in recent decades. This action causes long-term difficulties in locating the materials and in evaluating or counting an entire collection.